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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Memorandum of Conversation

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DATE: November 10, 1959

SUBJECT: Foreign Minister von Brentano's Letter to the Secretary  
and Preparations for a Summit Meeting

PARTICIPANTS: Wilhelm G. Grewe, German Ambassador  
The Secretary  
Martin J. Hillenbrand - GER

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757 Warren A. Kondracke

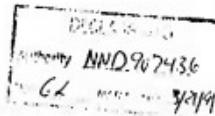
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In a conversation which also covered the subject of vested German assets (see separate memorandum), Ambassador Grewe began by apologizing for the delay in the delivery of the letter dated October 23, 1959, to the Secretary from Foreign Minister von Brentano. The delay was caused, according to Ambassador Grewe, by the peculiar way in which the letter had been sent to the German Embassy here. Since the letter had been written, Dr. Grewe continued, the German view had changed a little regarding a possible agenda for an East-West Summit. The Federal Government did not believe that disarmament should be the only item discussed at such a Summit; it would obviously also be necessary to deal with the Berlin and German question.

The Secretary commented that the Summit agenda was one of the things we had wanted to talk about in the preparatory Four Power discussions. This was a complicated question. The subject of disarmament, for example, was a tremendous one. We have received various proposals on the subject, and the Coolidge Group is making a thorough study of our position. We did not know yet when an East-West Summit meeting could take place. President deGaulle would presumably want it to come only after the Khrushchev visit to France. Another question was the relationship of the Ten-Power Disarmament talks to an East-West Summit. If these talks started before the Summit, it would not be very long before guidance would be required from the Heads of Governments. Therefore, we tended to prefer having the East-West Summit before the Ten-Power talks began.

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At an East-West Summit, the Secretary continued, it seemed certain that the Soviets would begin with their German peace treaty proposals. There were two possible approaches to a Berlin arrangement: to seek either a temporary or a more enduring agreement. The Secretary noted that he was sorry that Foreign Minister von Brentano felt, as indicated in his letter, that the West had weakened its position by the proposals made on July 28 at Geneva. This indicated that von Brentano did not wish further to discuss the possibility of some temporary arrangement. If the arrangement were not to be temporary, then it must be designed to last until German reunification. What kind of a solution would fill this need? If a solution cannot be found, then we must sooner or later count on the Soviets making a separate peace treaty with the East Germans.

Ambassador Grewe said his Government was always prepared to discuss possible solutions with its Allies, but it did not see anything new which could be done. He himself had tried to examine the range of possibilities and had come only to a negative conclusion. The difficulty with the Western proposals at Geneva was that the Soviets would use them as a starting point in the next round of negotiations. The Secretary commented that he did not see where we could give any further in terms of the Geneva approach.

As to the Spaak dichotomy between a Summit meeting with full preparations and one with no preparations, Ambassador Grewe stated, the Federal Government considered it impossible as well as dangerous to try to solve the big problems at one Summit meeting. However, the conclusion could not be drawn from this that careful preparations for an initial meeting were not necessary. The Secretary noted that, since we do not know precisely what the Soviets will propose at a Summit meeting, it was obviously too much to expect that the Western Heads of Governments could come up with all the answers within a period of four or five days. One problem with reference to a series of Summit meetings, the Secretary continued, was that if the first such meeting were to take place, say in April, it would be problematic when the next could take place. It would certainly not be advisable to have it in the heat of the American election campaign, and a new administration in this country must have a little time to organize itself. This seemed to mean one Summit per year, Ambassador Grewe commented. The Secretary observed this probably also meant that the Foreign Ministers would have to contemplate another meeting on their part.

Bonn was quite happy with the proposed preparations for the December Western Summit Meeting, Ambassador Grewe stated, and had authorized full participation by the German Embassy here. The Secretary observed that the Four Powers would have a problem with NATO. Spaak would be in Washington next week. He (the Secretary) had recently talked with the Norwegians and the Belgians. They wanted us to lay our disagreements before NATO and let it iron them out. How can this be done? Yet the NATO countries have a right to be consulted, since they are involved in the NATO guarantees as they relate to Berlin. It would be difficult to discuss these problems around a big table. We did not know precisely what Spaak had in mind, but he would undoubtedly expect a frank airing of all these matters in the NATO meeting. The Secretary noted

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that it now seemed as if the NATO Foreign Ministers would reconvene in Paris on December 22, and that he had indicated his willingness to stay over for such a meeting. Agreement must be reached on Summit philosophy, as well as on what might usefully be discussed at that level. If a reasonable meeting of minds could be obtained during the Paris meetings, the Four Western Powers would have a basis for continuing their studies in preparation for the East-West Summit.

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